

# IS Sex Socially determined too?

## 1. Introduction

Since the evolution of humans on Earth, the notion of men and women sex was conceived through biological lens. The biological construction of sex was not challenged throughout history. However, recent researches and human insights into the complex nature of sex has challenged the existing view, with arguing that sex was socially determined not biologically. Hence, sex is socially constructed phenomenon instead of biologically constructed idea.

## 2. What is Sex?

Here, sex does not mean intercourse in simple term rather it is an identity of women and man based on certain characteristics.

According to WHO.

"Sex refers to



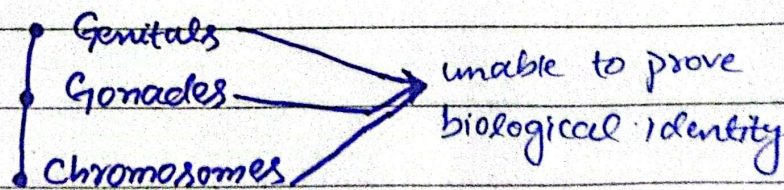
Certain biological and physiological characteristics that determine the identity of men & women"

### 3) How<sup>is</sup> Sex is socially determined?

The social determination and construction of sex is endorsed by different arguments which are as follows:

#### i) Rejection of biological arguments

The biological realities determine sexually identity but they are taken into question and <sup>it's</sup> argued that these identities remain unable to prove biological identity of sex. For instance:



#### a) Genitals:

are basically the organs attached with men and women that determine their identity. But these organs did not completely prove the identity of



of different sexes. Sometimes, it happens that the child is born with ambiguous genitals and he or she is socially called Intersex.

### • Intersex — ambiguous Genitals

Moreover, internal and external genitals do not match in certain cases.

### b) Gonades

Ovaries known for female while testies determine male identity. In certain cases male and female have both ovary and testies. These type of persons are called Cisgender socially.

### Cisgender

↓  
having ovaries and testies

### c) Chromosomes

XX Chromosomes are associated with female identity. On the other side, XY chromosomes are known for announcing male identity. But in most cases, XO and XXY chromosomes are found and these persons are named socially.



## ii) Social Construction of gender

Society plays an important role in determining Social Construction of Sex.

### a) Construction of identity during childhood

During childhood male and female babies are assigned different roles that play an important role in defining their sexual identity. Male children are allowed and taught to play with cars. Female baby is taught to play with doll. Therefore, Judith Butler has argued:

"the identity is not fixed rather make up of social construction"

(Gender Trouble)

The childhood nourishment associated with specification of gender identities.

### b) Construction of identity through language

Language also play an important role in defining sexual identity. Certain words such as confident, brave, Lion, and strong used for men only. Contrary to this, weak, emotional, poor creates



these words are used for females.

In this way, language effects the construction of sex because the words leave impact on individual. AS Mary Joe Frug argues:

"Sex is not something natural nor defineable rather it is a part of a system produced by language"

The language plays an important role in determining social identity.

### iii) Role of intersectional approach in defining Social identity of Sex

Intersectionality plays an important role in determining social construction of sex. In different countries the gender identity is perceived differently.

#### a) Example of Asian and African Society

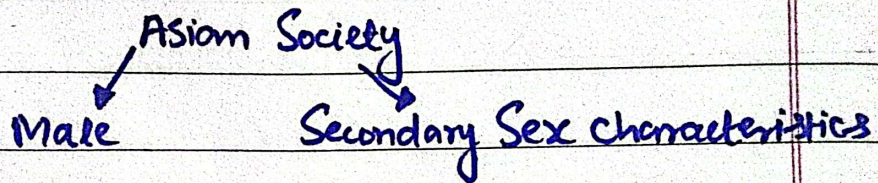
In African society erection is considered an important factor in proving male identity.

African Society  
Erection / Male

In African society, if a man does not



an erection, he will not be considered a man. On the other hand, Asian societies are completely different in determining the identity of a man. A man can be considered as a male if he has male characteristics. ~~Simply~~ If he has male secondary characteristics, he would be categorised as male.



## iv) Social Construction of Sex through legal and policy framework

### a) Texas Marriage law

Texas marriage law states that if a man marries a woman and then he changes his gender sex from male to female. Despite changing his sex, he is allowed to marry a woman. According to Texas marriage law, sex is socially determined idea. Same condition, if it occurs in Pakistan, is not allowed. But the permission of



Texas marriage does not make any difference in conversion of sex. The law still consider that person a man. But in Pakistan that person become women. Therefore, so law play a vital role in social construction of sex.

b) Case Study of Caster Semenya

Caster Semenya was a female athlete of running competition. She won a competition and was tested and it was found that she had testosterone. Due to this, she was barred from running in women competition. She was woman yet law decided that she did not fall into the category of women.

Short answer. Add more arguments

4. Conclusion

From the above arguments, it can be deduced that the sex is a socially constructed idea. It derives particular signs from biological construction but it is constructed socially. The case study of Caster Semenya, and complexities found in biology make it clear that it is social

A 20 marks answer should have around 15 subheadings/arguments